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Chairman: Mr. Wolfe ..... (Jamaica)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 66: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/62/297 and 319; A/C.3/62/2)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/62/182, 209 and 228)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*) (A/62/259)

1. **Mr. Bin Momen** (Bangladesh) said that his country had prioritized addressing the needs and problems of children and had also taken all necessary measures to guarantee the human rights and fundamental freedoms of children with disabilities. Constitutionally committed to children's advancement, Bangladesh was a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and was one of the few countries to ratify and report on both Optional Protocols to the Convention. His Government had implemented two national plans of action on children and was in the process of implementing a third, keeping in view the Millennium Development Goals and the World Fit For Children Action Plan. It had also increased its budgetary investment in children's issues over the previous three decades.

2. Facing an enormous gender gap in education at the start of the 1990s, Bangladesh had achieved 100 per cent parity in primary and secondary school enrolment by the end of 2006. Education for girls was free up to grade 12, and various incentives had increased girls' enrolment and prevented dropout cases. Material incentives for education and microcredit programmes had contributed to the well-being of children, particularly the girl child, and his country was currently focusing on improving the quality of education at all levels.

3. The elimination of child labour was being pursued through creation of viable opportunities, rehabilitation and skill development and by providing parents with access to microcredit to reduce dependency on their children. Child labour laws had been strictly enforced in the garment industry, with the support of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Children's' Fund (UNICEF). Further, Bangladesh was formulating a national policy on child labour, and it was a party to the ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the worst forms of child labour.

4. Although HIV/AIDS prevalence was low, his Government had adopted a national policy on HIV/AIDS with a particular focus on infected and affected children. A project addressed the needs of street and abandoned children, and stringent domestic legislation had been enacted to eliminate trafficking in persons, particularly children, and to protect children, particularly the girl child, against all forms of violence, discrimination, abuse and exploitation. Child mortality, malnutrition and iodine deficiency disorders had declined, polio had been eradicated altogether, and maternal health had improved. For several years, Bangladesh had been the main sponsor of the resolution on the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World and hoped that countries would continue to support its initiative.

5. **Mr. Murtaza** (Pakistan) said that there were persistent challenges in meeting the targets set out at the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly, guaranteeing healthy lives and quality education to children; protecting them from abuse, violence and exploitation; and combating HIV/AIDS. Children suffered the most from armed conflict, and migrants, refugees and internally displaced children as well as those living under foreign occupation remained the most vulnerable. The report of the Secretary-General pointed out that many of those challenges were rooted in discrimination that persisted between children in developing and developed countries, among children from ethnic minorities, and most pervasively between boys and girls because of entrenched gender discrimination in all societies.

6. Pakistan was committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, including those that related to child health and education. His country was a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including its two Protocols, and to the International Labour Organization's core convention on child labour. Children constituted 48 per cent of the population of Pakistan. Steps taken by his Government to promote the rights of the child included the establishment of a national commission for child welfare and development, responsible for promoting the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; a ban on corporal punishment in schools; the establishment of a minimum age for marriage for boys and girls; a ban on trafficking of children; the provision of free education up to tenth grade; a

national plan of action that aimed to achieve universal primary education by 2015; and eradication of child labour, which had been achieved in the soccer ball and carpet industries.

7. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that national actions had been taken in relation to the World Fit For Children Action Plan and that significant advances had been made. A new code on childhood and adolescence had entered into force the previous May, updating national regulations relating to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The law entailed measures that provided complete protection for children and adolescents, including guarantees for the exercise of rights and freedoms. The shared responsibility of the family, society, and the State in promoting and protecting children's rights were central principles of the new code.

8. Various policies and reforms being implemented had an impact on children. The policies addressed children's needs in early childhood, promoting family life and countering domestic violence, eliminating child labour, assisting street children and youth, and promoting sexual and reproductive health, aiming for a reduction in unwanted adolescent pregnancies. Advances in education would allow for the achievement of universal primary education by 2010, as well as a substantial increase in middle and higher education. Further, subsidies were granted to poor families in order to provide nutrition for children under the age of seven and education for children between 7 and 18 years of age.

9. The Colombian Institute of Family Welfare was also implementing a programme that attended to the needs of children and adolescents removed from illegal armed groups. Further, her Government had strengthened strategies for preventing illegal armed groups from using children, through childhood policies implemented at the departmental and municipal level, with support from UNICEF, ILO, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and some States. Colombia had incorporated the MDGs into its development plans and policies.

10. Her delegation had taken note of the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (A/62/228) and of the strategic review of the Machel Study. In the preparation of a comprehensive report on the findings, States should be allowed to express their considerations on the recommendations made. Colombia reaffirmed the importance of continuing the follow-up on the recommendations made in the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children (A/62/209). Nevertheless, the recommendation to appoint a special representative for that issue should be analysed more carefully, as every effort should be made to avoid any duplication or overlapping of functions.

11. The commemorative high-level plenary meeting devoted to the follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children in December was going to give States the opportunity to reaffirm the commitments made in 2002. The main outcome of that meeting should be the strengthening of international cooperation in initiatives promoting the rights of children.

12. **Ms. Park** Enna (Republic of Korea) said that, although many countries had established national action plans on children's issues, much remained to be done in order to create a world fit for children, where children's rights were fully guaranteed. Children around the world were exposed to armed conflicts, sexual exploitation, recruitment as child soldiers and other forms of violence, malnutrition and infant mortality. Those situations constituted an infringement of their rights. Therefore, an increased commitment and stronger international partnership were required to reach the goals of the 2002 special session of the General Assembly on children.

13. The issue of violence against children should be fully addressed. While it commended the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and UNICEF initiatives in protecting children, her delegation supported more consolidated and coordinated efforts by the United Nations system to end violence against children, including the appointment of a Special Representative. The Republic of Korea strongly supported the recommendations made in the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (A/62/228), which included ending impunity, prioritizing children's security, stopping gender-based violence and integrating children's rights into peacemaking and peacebuilding. Her delegation also emphasized that disabled children's enjoyment of their full rights was an indispensable part of the World Fit For Children campaign.

14. The World Fit For Children Action Plan served as a guideline for her Government's domestic policies on children. A committee had been established under the Prime Minister's office in 2004 to coordinate national policies on children, monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and encourage cooperation among various ministries relating to children. The Ministry of Health and Welfare had developed a monitoring system to prevent the violation of children's rights. A child rights monitoring centre had also been established to prevent child trafficking, child prostitution and child pornography. Lastly, the National Youth Commission had taken measures to raise public awareness in order to eliminate the abuse and exploitation of young people.

15. **Mr. Liu** Zhenmin (People's Republic of China) said that, despite the steady progress made by the international community on the issue of promoting and protecting the rights of children, numerous challenges remained. Attention should be given to the root causes of violations of children's rights. His Government called upon developed countries to share greater responsibilities and obligations and to assist developing countries with resources and technology in order to build a sound environment for the healthy development of children around the world.

16. As China's children made up one fifth of the world's child population, his Government bore a major responsibility in the promotion and protection of children's rights. In its efforts to implement the MDGs, China had worked to fulfil its international obligations through the Programme for the Development of Chinese Children, promulgated in 2001. The Programme was a national plan of action on children's issues, and the 2006 assessment made by the State Council's National Committee on Women and Children indicated that as of 2005, the implementation of the programme was on the whole satisfactory.

17. China had put in place the basic domestic legislative and regulatory system for the protection of children's rights, which consisted of the Constitution, the civil code and laws on adoption, the protection of minors and compulsory education. Further, a system of national institutions had been established to work on children's issues, headed by the National Working Committee on Children and Women. Specific action plans had also been adopted to address difficulties in children's development. The Government had strengthened its services for orphaned, disabled and homeless children and had worked to protect the rights of migrant children. It had also sought to prevent and control the spread of HIV/AIDS and assist AIDS orphans, and to protect children, especially girls, from abuse, exploitation and violence.

18. China had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991 and the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and was working to ratify the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. The Committee on the Rights of the Child had highly appraised China's reports on the implementation of the Convention. The previous June, his Government had enacted a newly revised law on the protection of minors, incorporating the relevant provisions of the Convention and guaranteeing their basic rights to life, development, protection, participation and education. China was in the midst of an economic and social transition. It recognized that much remained to be done to protect the rights of the child and would continue to work tirelessly in order to do so.

19. **Ms. Al-Obaidli** (Qatar) said that children's issues were one of her Government's main development priorities and had been addressed by its various ministries, aiming to ensure children's full development and participation in age-appropriate activities, as well as their protection from all forms of violence and exploitation. The Qatari Constitution and relevant legislation enshrined children's rights to education, health care and protection.

20. Significant progress had been made in providing primary health-care services to mothers and children over the previous four decades. Education coverage had also been extended to cover the entire school cycle. Further, Qatar had also improved social and economic welfare for all classes, thus reducing in child mortality rates as well as increasing school enrolment rates for both genders. Social assistance services were provided to all Qatari citizens. National economic prosperity had resulted in an enhanced standard of living for all.

21. The Superior Council on the Family had undertaken national plans for the protection of the family, foremost among them a national strategy for children's issues for the years 2008 to 2013. The three-part strategy consisted of ensuring health, education and protection for children. Further, a school

literacy network had been established to enrich children's cultural environment by holding regional and national competitions in reading and writing. Lastly, Qatar reaffirmed its commitment to consolidating its national action plan in accordance with the relevant international conventions and protocols.

22. **Mr. Yousfi** (Algeria) said that, despite the considerable progress made globally in ensuring respect for the rights of the child, especially in the areas of education and a reduction in child mortality from disease, children continued to be the victims of abuse, exploitation and violence. The report of the Secretary-General drew attention to the short and long-term effects of violence on children. There was no lack of political will among the international community for the protection of children, as that commitment had resulted in numerous declarations and legally binding international instruments with almost universal accession, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The forthcoming high-level dialogue should provide an opportunity to identify obstacles preventing that political will from being put into action.

23. Children were Algeria's most precious asset, and the Government placed priority on their education, mental and physical health care, and protection. Accordingly, it had ratified a number of international and regional conventions for the protection of children. Programmes for infectious disease prevention and control, vaccination and birth spacing had been successful in reducing the child mortality rate. Algeria also attached great importance to the family as the most natural environment for the rearing of children and provided social support to families. Abandoned children were placed with adoptive families under the *kafala* system to give them foster care and integrate them into society. His country's investment in a system of free and compulsory primary education, which did not discriminate between boys and girls, had achieved 94 per cent enrolment in 2005. The school enrolment effort was accompanied by social support measures providing grants for school supplies and meals and transportation for students in remote areas.

24. His Government took the problem of violence against children very seriously, because of its serious impact on their physical and mental health, and had developed a national strategy which highlighted the multiple aspects of the issue. It also conducted regular evaluations of its implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the context of its national human rights advisory committee, and disseminated the provisions of the Convention through civics education classes in the schools and public information campaigns.

25. **Mr. Rachkov** (Belarus) said that the protection of children's interests was a prerequisite for sustainable development. Belarus was party to key international agreements on children's rights, which were reflected in domestic legislation. The national plan of action for 2004-2010 was informed by the outcome of the special session on children, and young people had participated in its elaboration. There had been a significant strengthening of the monitoring role of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child in 2006.

26. Concerted efforts were being undertaken to improve the quality of children's health care and to reduce child mortality, which, at 14 per 1,000 live births, was the lowest in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Vaccination coverage in Belarus stood at 99 per cent. Social services had been also significantly strengthened, with 20,000 children fostered or adopted over the past five years, allowing for the closure of several orphanages. Penalties for parental neglect had been tightened, with parents responsible for funding their children's care within foster families. Juvenile crime had fallen by 10 per cent since 2005 following the introduction of relevant legislative measures, and the proportion of minors sentenced to imprisonment had also fallen by 40 per cent in recent years. Belarus attached great importance to the strengthening of international cooperation on children's rights.

27. **Mr. Chernenko** (Russian Federation) said that, although international cooperation was being strengthened, the goals set by the special session on children had yet to be fully achieved by the international community. In the context of the Organization's ongoing reforms and in an effort to avoid duplication, the establishment of any new bureaucratic structures should be approached with caution. It was more important to strengthen child protection mechanisms at all levels than to establish yet more highly paid posts for international civil servants.

28. A programme for children for 2007-2010 was a key component of federal social policy. A commission

coordinating government efforts in support of children also held sessions in outlying districts to raise local awareness of children's issues. The importance attached by the Russian Federation to the role of the family was reflected in the President's declaration of 2008 as the Year of the Family. A children's national television channel had also been launched for the first time in the country's history. The realization of the rights of children was a universal aspiration which had the potential to unite the efforts of Member States at all levels.

29. **Ms. Perez Alvarez** (Cuba) said that the children of the world were threatened by wars, hunger, greed and inequality. In the years since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the special session of the General Assembly on children, notwithstanding the efforts of many Governments and organizations, little progress had been made in favour of children. Cuba, a small Caribbean island blockaded by the United States Government for more than 45 years, could show substantive achievements in all areas of children's development because of the resources devoted to education, health and care for disabled children. Cuba had one of the world's lowest child mortality rates, at 5.3 per thousand live births, as a result of efforts to build a health-care system that guaranteed quality of life beginning with pregnancy care.

30. Children had the right to free, universal and compulsory education; the literacy rate was 99.6 per cent. Those achievements were the result of the political will of the Government and the extraordinary effort by the people, despite the dire consequences of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States, which was the most serious form of violence against Cuban children. The international community must put an end to all forms of abuse of children; no one should allow themselves to sleep peacefully at night while children were being victimized or suffering from hunger and neglect around the world. While the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children (A/62/209) was valuable, her delegation would also welcome his consideration of the impact of unilateral coercive measures on the children of the world.

31. **Mr. Hannesson** (Iceland) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child had proven to be an invaluable tool in efforts to further the rights of children all over the world. His delegation remained concerned, however, at the large number of reservations to the Convention. The report of the independent expert had also exposed the horrendous scale and impact of violence against children and had focused the necessary attention on that serious issue as a catalyst for change by identifying areas where concrete action was needed. Iceland welcomed his report (A/62/209) and supported its recommendations, in particular the recommendation to appoint a special representative on violence against children for a period of four years.

32. Iceland also welcomed the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict (A/62/228), which emphasized the role of field visits as a key element of her advocacy strategy, and stressed the need for follow-up to commitments made during those visits and for targeted measures against violators who refused to enter into dialogue. It supported the finding of the 10-year strategic review of the study on the impact of armed conflict on children that the most effective way of protecting children's rights was to prevent conflict and promote peace and security.

33. Iceland had adopted a plan of action to strengthen children's rights and support families and was implementing Council of Europe recommendations in support of positive parenting and for the protection of children against sexual exploitation and abuse. His Government emphasized the key importance of the role of UNICEF. He was proud to report that the people of Iceland were among the largest contributors per capita to the work of UNICEF. The children of the world were its future, and the international community had a duty to protect them on all fronts. It had made many commitments to protect children's rights, which must be turned into action.

34. **Ms. Bana** (Iraq) said that if children were not able to enjoy their rights, it would be difficult for them to do so later in life. Despite the fact that Iraqi children suffered from instability and insecurity and were being injured, disabled and killed on a daily basis, they were encouraged by both the Government and their families to persevere in their studies and would be the builders of the new Iraq.

35. A State committee had recommended the ratification of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which had been

ratified by Iraq in 1994. Iraq planned to pass, for the first time, a uniform code on the rights of the child, which were considered the basis of human rights. Its Constitution prohibited the economic exploitation of children and contained other safeguards for families, women and children. Iraq planned to adopt new laws and amend existing ones against all forms of violence against children, to provide more social welfare institutions for children and review their funding and to strive to end all forms of conscription of children. The Government of Iraq urged the international community, especially the United Nations and humanitarian organizations, to cooperate with both governmental and non-governmental institutions in Iraq to ease the suffering of children there and guarantee them a stable environment in which to live.

36. **Mr. Acharya** (India) said that the progress made in achieving the goals identified at the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children had been unsatisfactory, as illustrated by the fact that, of the world's 2.2 billion children under 15, an estimated 1 billion lived in poverty. Apart from focusing attention on children's rights, there should be support for their development needs, such as adequate food, basic infrastructure, health care and access to education. The regrettable decline in official development assistance reduced the funding that could be invested in children, and his delegation supported the call to bridge the financing gap — the difference between what developing countries needed to invest to achieve their goals and what they could mobilize from their own resources — by raising the assistance level of developed countries.

37. His delegation appreciated the efforts of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to present concrete recommendations to improve protection and care of children, and welcomed the efforts of the Peacebuilding Commission to develop mechanisms for the rehabilitation and reintegration of children affected by armed conflict. India had adopted an integrated approach to address the welfare of children, who comprised 41 per cent of its population, the largest child population in the world, and was implementing the world's largest early childhood development programme under the Integrated Child Development Services. It took a proactive stance on the issue of child protection and had undertaken several legislative initiatives in that area. India had conducted a nationwide study on child abuse to determine the magnitude of the problem and was in the process of designing further measures to address the problem of violence against children.

38. Through the Universal Elementary Education Scheme, the Government was making progress towards the achievement of Goal 2 of the Millennium Development Goals, universal primary education, and had resolved to increase public spending on education to at least 6 per cent of GDP. India remained strongly committed to the full eradication of all forms of child labour, beginning with its most exploitative and hazardous forms and moving progressively to its effective elimination. The ban on the employment of children under age 14 as domestic or food service workers in 2006 marked an important milestone in that respect. Its programme to remove children from economic activity was the largest in the world. Lastly, India was working towards the full realization of the goals of "A world fit for children" as well as the related Millennium Development Goals.

39. **Ms. Blitt** (Canada), speaking on behalf of the CANZ delegations (Canada, Australia and New Zealand), stressed the importance that the group attributed to close cooperation between the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, civil society and Governments. Believing that the Convention on the Rights on the Child should constitute the primary standard in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, she called upon those Member States which had not done so to ratify it and give early consideration to signing and ratifying the Optional Protocols to the Convention. She also welcomed the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol.

40. The report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children (A/62/209) was crucial, and effective ways must be found to follow up its recommendations at the national, regional and global levels. Although significant advances had been made in developing the normative framework for the protection of children in armed conflict since the Machel Study (A/51/306 and Add.1), she fully supported the recommendations for greater action by Member States to ensure accountability and prevent all violations against children.

41. Progress had been made in monitoring and reporting on children in armed conflict, as called for

under Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), but Member States should maintain their attention on real progress in the field in all situations. Stressing the need to enforce targeted measures against parties to a conflict who persistently committed serious violations, she urged the Security Council to use all the tools at its disposal to that end, such as peacekeeping missions and the naming of offenders. Lastly, she looked forward to participating in the high-level plenary meeting devoted to the follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children in December 2007.

42. **Mr. Vigny** (Switzerland) said that, despite positive developments in the promotion of the rights of the child, there were still major challenges in a number of areas, including the protection of children against abuse, violence and exploitation. Girls, in particular, were subjected to serious human rights violations and, as a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to their respective Protocols, Switzerland was committed to taking all necessary measures to eliminate discriminatory practices against girls and women, at both the national and international level.

43. His country supported the actions of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to ensure gender equality and encouraged the Governments with which it cooperated, as well as civil society organizations, to take steps to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against girls and women. Switzerland believed that it was the responsibility of Member States to ensure the effective implementation of the recommendations contained in the key report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children (A/62/209), stressing the importance of ensuring participation by children in the formulation and implementation of policies that affected them.

44. Understanding the independent expert's concern that effective action to end violence against children required high-level leadership, including the appointment of a special representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children, Switzerland was concerned about the number of overlapping mechanisms in the United Nations and believed that UNICEF would be well placed to take up that task, although other international agencies would also have their part to play.

45. **Mr. Pham Hai Anh** (Viet Nam) said that his country was doing its utmost to implement the objectives of The World Fit for Children Action Plan by developing child-friendly legal frameworks and action plans for children and that much progress had been achieved. Both maternal and infant mortality rates had dropped considerably from 2002 to 2005 and the under-five malnutrition rate had also declined. From 2005 onwards, children under six years of age had been entitled to free medical check-ups.

46. Educational facilities had been built throughout the country, including for pre-school education. School enrolment, both at primary and secondary schools, was extremely high: in 2004, it had been 97 per cent and 85 per cent, respectively. The Government was also implementing programmes to promote the education of children from ethnic minorities. Alternative education was being offered to children of school age unable to attend school, and education for children with disabilities had been incorporated into the regular pre-school, primary and secondary education programmes.

47. The national strategy for the protection of children and adolescents aimed to create child protection systems at all levels, focusing on children at risk of abuse and exploitation. In addition, the objective of the current socio-economic plan was to ensure that 90 per cent of children in difficult circumstances were supported and cared for by 2010. New indicators for child protection were being finalized and current monitoring systems strengthened. A child-friendly justice system based on the rights of the child was taking shape. Viet Nam had established a solid legal framework of measures to prevent and address HIV/AIDS among children, including the 2006 law on HIV/AIDS prevention, which contained special provisions on children living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

48. **Ms. Lund** (Norway) said that progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals related to children had not been even in all countries, with many children throughout the world still being subject to social exclusion, abuse and extreme forms of exploitation. Under the leadership of the Prime Minister of Norway, an international partnership of Governments, the United Nations and private sector

actors, was working strategically towards reaching Goals 4, 5 and 6. Her country was involved in the Education for All movement and would be hosting the high-level group meeting in 2008. It had also initiated, early in 2007, an international process aimed at banning cluster munitions.

49. Multiple forms of discrimination and practices disproportionately affected girls, and due regard should be paid to the independent expert's recommendations calling upon Member States to address all forms of gender discrimination as part of a comprehensive violence prevention strategy. The ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was not enough; it should be incorporated into national legislation on child protection. That had been done in Norway through the Human Rights Act, and the Convention took precedence over national legislation.

50. Expressing appreciation for the two reports submitted to the Committee in documents (A/62/209 and A/62/228), Norway favoured a strong mandate for an independent high-profile advocate to lead international efforts to promote the prevention and elimination of all violence against children, in cooperation with key organizations and agencies. It also wished to be a partner in the follow-up to the 10-year strategic review. Lastly, the agenda and round tables for the forthcoming high-level plenary meeting devoted to the follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children should address ways of promoting child participation as that was key to successful implementation of many other rights of the child such as the rights to education, health and protection from violence and abuse.

51. **Mr. Rastam** (Malaysia) said that his delegation believed firmly that promotion and protection of the rights of children should be at the forefront of every country's development agenda. While serious efforts were needed at the national level, many problems faced by children were closely related to lack of development and poverty and would not be solved unless the underlying development issues were addressed. Some of those obstacles included lack of resources, debt and the decline in international funding. If there was a true commitment to the promotion and protection of the rights of children, the needs for resources must be addressed.

52. Following the commitment made at the World Summit for Children in 1990, Malaysia had formulated a National Plan of Action for Children in coordination with government agencies, non-governmental organizations and international agencies, in particular UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO). The Plan outlined measures and programmes designed to meet the national goal of achieving the status of a developed nation by 2020. The country's ninth five-year economic development plan for the period 2006-2010 included specific attention to the childcare sector and children's education. Under the Plan, eradication of poverty, reduction of income disparity and improving health care, shelter and water supply would have positive effects for children. The Government was building partnerships and alliances with the private sector and non-governmental organizations to allow for a broader spectrum of ideas and proposals. Best practices from around the world were also taken into consideration.

53. Violence against children could never be justified. Poverty, income inequality, political instability and conflict were among the many factors identified that could increase the risk of violence against children. In addressing the subject, children whose rights were denied due to situations of conflict and the plight of children living under foreign occupation must also be included. Malaysia had developed mechanisms for protecting children from violence, exploitation and abuse, including a 24-hour toll-free hotline to report suspected cases of child abuse. It had also established child protection teams at state and district levels to mobilize community participation. Malaysia reaffirmed its strong commitment to the protection and promotion of the rights of children, as they were the ones who would be expected to ensure the well-being of the community, the nation and the world.

54. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that building a world fit for children was high on the list of her country's national priorities. As early as 2002 it had begun work on a national strategy for early childhood development, which had led to the idea of a "Children's Parliament" designed to prepare children for participation in the democratic process. The Central Bureau of Statistics had a special unit to compile a national database on children. The national plan for the protection of children protected the rights of children in accordance with international agreements to which the Syrian Arab Republic was a party, which included the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two

Optional Protocols and International Labour Organization Conventions No. 138 and No. 182 on child labour.

55. The Syrian education system employed the most up-to-date methods to prepare children for a brighter future, and health services were constantly being expanded and upgraded to protect children's health from the womb to adolescence. Regionally, the Syrian Arab Republic took part in various regional Arab meetings on children's issues, and in 2007 had hosted the preparatory meeting for the second Arab Parliamentarian Conference on Children.

56. However, a significant segment of Syrian children was being denied the benefits of that progress because they were living in the Syrian Golan under the Israeli occupation, which, among other things, had closed Arabic language schools and banned Syrian books in its attempt to impose Israeli citizenship and lifestyles on the population. Her delegation was disappointed that the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children (A/62/259) did not cover the suffering of children under Israeli occupation in the Syrian Golan and the Palestinian territory, particularly since the outcome documents of the 1995 World Summit on Children and the 2002 special session of the General Assembly on children had covered that subject.

57. **Ms. Assoumou** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that, despite the pledges made at the World Summit for Children in 1990 and the Millennium Development Goals ambitiously set in 2000, children continued to be found on the street, in kitchens, in pornographic films and in situations of armed conflict and landmine zones worldwide. In Côte d'Ivoire, a national plan of action was aimed at suppressing recruitment of child soldiers by the Armed Forces of the Forces Nouvelles and militia groups. Following the Ouagadougou Political Agreement and for the first time since the beginning of the crisis, the school year for the country's children had begun on 17 September 2007.

58. As part of its action in support of children, the Government planned to establish a mechanism to coordinate child protection efforts, elaborate a plan of action to eradicate sexual violence against children, strengthen institutional capacity for the reintegration of child soldiers and introduce a civic service programme for the social readaptation of more than 400,000 young people. Child labour had become a worldwide phenomenon. Her Government, for its part, had made the promotion of children's rights and the family a priority, and the theme chosen for the 2007 National Day against Child Labour had been "Agriculture without child labour". The national plan of action for children, elaborated in line with the outcome of the special session, had yet to be adopted owing to the crisis situation in the country, however measures in support of children, particularly in the areas of health and education, were being implemented with the help of development partners, notably the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

59. Côte d'Ivoire was party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, as well as International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 138 on the minimum age for admission to employment and ILO Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour. In implementation of those Conventions, a decree had been enacted defining dangerous forms of child labour for children under the age of 10. At the subregional level, Côte d'Ivoire was also a party to several bilateral and multilateral agreements to combat trafficking in children, while at the domestic level relevant legislation was in the process of being finalized. Given that poverty was the root cause of all the phenomena under discussion, her delegation urged all developed countries that had not already done so to step up their official development assistance to countries in need.

60. **Ms. Molaroni** (San Marino) said that her Government had always been very active in safeguarding children, in particular children with disabilities. It had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the first Convention to deal with the rights of children with disabilities, and had been among the first countries to sign the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which addressed the protection of children with disabilities in its article 7. San Marino had a long history of assisting disabled children in receiving an education and had been integrating those children into the school system for 40 years. All teachers received special training in dealing with the challenges disabled students faced. At the same time, specialized day-care centres for children with severe disabilities assisted them in development activities throughout their life cycle. Moreover, all

schools conducted programmes to raise awareness of the difficulties faced by disabled students.

61. Currently, 90 per cent of children with disabilities in developing countries did not attend school. In member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), disabled students remained under-represented in higher education. Such children often did not enjoy access to health care and risked being denied emergency life-saving treatment. Their mortality rate was as high as 80 per cent in countries where under-5 mortality had on the whole dropped below 20 per cent. Children with disabilities were more likely than others not to be registered at birth, making them more vulnerable to be killed with impunity or to become victims of violence, trafficking or mental, physical or sexual abuse. Accordingly, her Government intended to sign the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

62. Children were not always in a position to know their rights as citizens and did not have access to information or participation in the life of their communities, nor did they take part in decisions that concerned them. The international community must ensure that children with disabilities were given equal rights, which could be done only if Governments signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and committed themselves to its full implementation.

63. **Ms. Sapag** (Chile) said that her country's President had launched an early childhood initiative "Chile grows with you", which provided equal opportunities for development to all children in Chile, regardless of their social origin. That programme, unprecedented in Latin America, offered pre-natal care and integral support to all children in their early years and contained actions aimed directly at children from the poorest 40 per cent of households and those in vulnerable situations.

64. As State party to the major international instruments on the rights of children, Chile reiterated its commitment to any initiatives that protected children from violence, including armed conflict or urban and family violence. It particularly supported the view expressed in the Special Representative's report (A/62/228) that the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups required effective implementation. She also agreed with the recommendation in the independent expert's report (A/62/209) that a special representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children should be appointed to ensure high-level leadership. Noting the independent expert's reference to violence in educational settings in his conclusions, Chile shared that concern and believed that continuing attention should be paid to such issues as violence and bullying in schools, as referred to in General Assembly resolution 61/146.

65. Chile was following with interest the process to adopt the United Nations guidelines for the protection and alternative care of children without parental care. It also acknowledged the important conclusions and recommendations for eliminating discrimination and violence against girls, adopted at the fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Aware that a number of countries would be unable to attain Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 concerning child mortality under five years of age and maternal mortality, Chile particularly welcomed the World Health Organization (WHO) campaign Deliver Now for Woman and Children, which it hoped would be launched at the XVII Ibero-American Summit to be hosted by her country in November 2007.

66. **Mr. Khani Jooyabad** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his country had consistently invested in a better future for its children. Sound social policies and legislative measures had been introduced for the promotion and protection of their rights, the aim being to ensure that all children enjoyed access to a full range of opportunities, as well as a safe environment so that they could reach their full potential. The Islamic Republic of Iran had recently become a party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. Relevant bodies, including children's courts, were involved in the promotion of a harmonious family environment as well as positive discipline and an understanding of child development and children's rights based on educational approaches. A new bill was also being drafted to amend the existing law on child delinquency.

67. The country had recently welcomed visits from the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children. Each had admired the professionalism of its Juvenile Correction and

Rehabilitation Centre, which the independent expert felt might serve as a role model for South-South cooperation.

68. **Mr. Riofrío** (Ecuador) said that his country had set up a National Council under its Code for Children and Adolescents to serve as a focal point to deal with violence against children. The Council, made up of both State and civil society organizations, was in the process of implementing a 10-year plan with specific objectives concerning child protection. Furthermore, reforms to the Penal Code in 2005 had incorporated crimes such as child pornography, human trafficking and sexual exploitation into Ecuadorian legislation.

69. Ecuador welcomed the recent adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which recognized the right of indigenous children to protection against economic exploitation and hazardous working conditions and the right of indigenous people to educate their children about their own culture and traditions. His delegation also agreed with the independent expert's recommendation to appoint a special representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children and hoped that the mandate of the high-level advocate would be incorporated into the draft resolution on the rights of the child adopted every year by the Third Committee.

70. Concerned by the growing number of children used in armed conflicts, Ecuador urged all Member States to put an end to such practices by ratifying and implementing the relevant international instruments. In compliance with its international obligations, it was giving high priority to refugee children, most of whom were unaccompanied minors, and working in close cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to integrate those children into their host communities. Lastly, Ecuador looked forward to the meeting devoted to the follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children in December 2007.

71. **Mr. Jeenbaev** (Kyrgyzstan) said that a national programme of action for the suppression of the worst forms of child labour and a national programme for the protection of the rights of children had been elaborated in implementation of Kazakhstan's international commitments on children. In 2006, a Children's Code drawn up with the assistance of UNICEF had been adopted, the first of its kind in Central Asia. A National Council established to coordinate implementation of the Code was chaired by the State Secretary, and the President had recently signed a decree for the protection and support of children.

72. At the local level, social services identified problem families and provided support to homeless children. Currently, some 954,600 children had been identified as being "at risk", of which 854,900 lived below the poverty line. Some 51 per cent of those children were of pre-school age. The international charity Every Child currently provided support to families in two of the country's regions. Centres had been set up within district administrations to help implement national policy on children, and regulations governing implementation of the Children's Code were in the drafting stage. A range of projects were also being implemented to support vulnerable children, including those engaged in child labour, neglected children, orphans, children with special needs and juvenile delinquents.

73. Measures were also being taken to prevent children from ending up in State boarding schools. The efforts of social services were insufficient, however, to solve the problem of homeless children in the country. Kyrgyzstan attached great importance to cooperation with international organizations in support of children's rights and highly appreciated the results of a visit by members of the UNICEF Executive Board. With Fund's help, the juvenile justice system was undergoing reform and alternatives to imprisonment for young people were being devised. His Government was committed to ongoing efforts to raise the status of children in Kyrgyzstan.

74. **Mr. Ndjonkou** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that millions of girl and boy labourers and legally employed adolescents continued to face violence at their places of work. According to his organization's figures, 126 million children were subjected to the worst forms of child labour, and some 1.2 million children were trafficked into forced and bonded labour situations, organized begging, plantation work and commercial sexual exploitation. Child domestic labour performed mainly by girls was in its extreme forms tantamount to violence, although it was not recognized by all countries as a hazardous form of child labour.

75. To support States in their implementation of ILO Convention No. 182, the ILO International Programme

on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) had developed a time-bound programme approach offering tools and mechanisms for making a measurable and timely impact in national efforts to combat the scourge. The Programme's target of elaborating national plans of action against child labour by 2008 and eliminating its worst forms by 2016 had been approved by regional declarations in Africa, Asia and the Americas. South-South and horizontal cooperation was another important mechanism for combating child labour, as evidenced by the experience of Portugal, Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa and Brazil, which were exchanging good practices and technical cooperation. The Ministers of Labour of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries had signed a declaration and plan of action on joint action to combat the worst forms of child labour.

76. The use of children in armed conflict as combatants or for auxiliary activities for armed groups such as cooks, porters, or for sexual services, was also a cause for alarm. His organization concentrated on the socio-economic reintegration of such children, as well as on preventing their recruitment. To consolidate years of experience in the field, ILO was publishing a strategic document on the issue to serve as an important tool for implementing the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups. To help Governments ensure that child labour was adequately addressed in national education and other development policies, ILO encouraged inter-agency cooperation and was an active member of the Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education for All together with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.